

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 A-01 AID-05 CCO-00 HA-05
OC-06 OMB-01 OPR-02 CA-01 MCT-01 SCS-06 SY-05
USSS-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
CU-04 TRSE-00 DOE-11 DOEE-00 SOE-02 PC-01 COME-00
ACDA-12 IO-13 /126 W
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O R 171400Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9773
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMCONSUL ADANA
AMCONSUL IZMIR

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 ISTANBUL 0819

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, ASEC, TU
SUBJECT: THE NEW POLITICAL VIOLENCE

REF: ANKARA 0908

SUMMARY: SINCE BEGINNING OF YEAR POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN
ISTANBUL HAS INCREASED MARKEDLY OVER LAST YEAR'S RATE OF
INCIDENTS. EXTREMISTS ARE TARGETING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS,
AND APPEARS BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT ARE CHALLENGING ECEVIT
GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER. WORST DAY
OF YEAR FOR ISTANBUL CAME MARCH 16 WITH DAYLIGHT ATTEMPT
TO ASSASSINATE POLICE OFFICIAL AND CLASH AT ISTANBUL
UNIVERSITY KILLING FIVE STUDENTS AND WOUNDING FORTY.
ALTHOUGH POLICE EFFORTS TO CONTROL VIOLENCE HAVE HAD SOME
SUCCESS, FURTHER INCREASE IN RATE OF URBAN TERRORISM WILL
SOEELY TEST POLICE RESOURCES.
ONE SOLUTION MAY BE IMPOSITION
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OF MARTIAL LAW IN PROVINCE. END SUMMARY

1. ISTANBUL IS UNDERGOING PRONOUNCED UPSURGE IN INCIDENTS
OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE. SINCE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT CAME TO
POWER AT BEGINNING OF 1978, RATE OF BOMBINGS AND KILLINGS
HAS APPROXIMATELY DOUBLED OVER THAT OF PREVIOUS YEAR.
CURRENT VIOLENCE IS MARKED BY INCREASED RESORT TO URBAN

TERRORISM BY RIGHT-WING "DOMMANDOS" AND TARGETING OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS BY EXTREMISTS (PROBABLY LEFTISTS).

2. MARCH 16 WAS PARTICULARLY EVENTFUL DAY IN THIS TREND WITH BOTH LEFTISTS AND RIGHTISTS CARRYING OUT SEPARATE SPECTACULAR ASSAULTS. PRESS REPORTS AND POLICE CONFIRM, THAT DURING MORNING WELL-KNOWN POLICE COMMISSIONER, WHO HEADS ISTANBUL REACTION SQUAD FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE INCIDENTS, WAS ATTACKED IN HIS CAR WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPON FIRE AND HAND GRENADES. ATTEMPT TO ASSASINATE HIM WAS REPORTEDLY CARRIED OUT BY TERRORISTS FROM EXTREME LEFT TIKKO (TURKISH PEASANT WORKERS LIBERATION ARMY). THREE POLICEMEN WERE WOUNDED IN ASSAULT AND THREE TERRORISTS WERE CAPTURED AFTER RUNNING GUNFIGHT AND HOUSE TO HOUSE SEARCH IN ONE OF BUSIEST SECTORS OF CITY. LATER SAME DAY, RIGHT-WING GROUP THREW HAND BOMB AND OPENED FIRE ON A CROWD OF STUDENTS IN FRONT OF MAIN BUILDING OF ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY. FIVE STUDENTS WERE KILLED AND OVER FORTY WOUNDED, SEVERAL CRITICALLY. UNIVERSITY WAS CLOSED INDEFINITELY.

3. SINCE MID-JANUARY, WHEN CYCLE OF HIGH LEVEL OF VIOLENCE BEGAN (ISTANBUL 0173), SITUATION HERE HAS, WITH SOME LAPSES OF COMPARATIVE CALM FOR A FEW DAYS, BECOME WORSE. IN LAST PART OF JANUARY, BY OUR COUNT, SOME 23 TERRORIST BOMBS WERE SET OFF IN ISTANBUL AND ENVIRONS; IN FEBRUARY THERE WERE 45. IN RECENT DAYS, ALMOST EVERY NIGHT AT LEAST ONE AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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USUALLY MORE BOMBS GO OFF IN CITY. PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS HAVE INCREASINGLY BEEN TARGETED. AT LEAST TWO POLICE STATIONS HAVE BEEN BOMBED SINCE JANUARY. MUNICIPAL PALACE HAS BEEN HIT TWICE IN RECENT WEEKS. A COMMUTER TRAIN WAS BOMBED IN FEBRUARY AND EXPLOSIVE, WHICH HAPPILY DID NOT GO OFF, WAS PLA ED ON ASSENGER FERRY. IN ADDITION, NUMBER OF MUNICIPAL BUSES PARKED OVERNIGHT WERE SERIOUSLY DAMAGED BY EXPLOSIVES MARCH 9. SINCE ISTANBUL UNIVESITY REOPENED AFTER SEMESTER BREAK AND HIGH SHOOLS RESUMED CLASSES MARCH 6 IDEOLOGICAL CLASHES BETWEEN STUDENT GROUPS HAVE BECOME EVERYDAY OCCURRENCES, AT LICEES AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES.

4. SO FAR, AMERICANS HAVE NOT BEEN PRIMARY OBJECT OF THIS CURRENT WAVE OF VIOLENCE, AND POLIC HAVE GIVEN NO INDICATION THAT THEY EXPECT US TO BE TARGETED. RECENTLY THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY TWO AMONG THE MANY INCIDENTS WHICH INVOLVED U.S. INSTITUTIONS. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL ON CENTRALLY LOCATED TAKSIM SQUARE WAS STRAFED WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPON FIRE

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SEVERAL WEEKS AGO AND LAST WEEK AMERICAN GIRLS SCHOOL IN
USKADAR RECEIVED BOMB THREAT. NEITHER INCIDENT SEEMS TO
US TO MEAN AMERICAN PERSONNEL OR INSTITUTIONS ARE IN
PARTICULAR DANGER FROM WHAT APPEARS TO BE INTERNAL PROBLEM.
HOWEVER WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED UNCONFIRMED INTELLIGENCE REPORT
INDICATING POSSIBLE TARGETTING OF AMERICAN PERSONNEL. WE HAVE
BRIEFED STAFF ON INCREASED VIOLENCE AND HAVE REVIEWED POST
SECURITY PRECAUTIONS.

5. PRIOR TO MARCH 16 OUTBREAK, POLICE CHIEF AND GOVERNOR HAD
BEEN RELATIVELY UP-BEAT IN THEIR ASSESSMENTS TO CONSUL
GENERAL ON PROSPECTS FOR CONTROLLING CITY'S POLITICAL
VIOLENCE. LOCAL POLICE HAVE GOTTEN NUMBER OF NEW VEHICLES
AND PARA-MILITARY "JANDARMA" FORCES HAVE BEEN
INCREASINGLY USED TO SUPPLEMENT POLICE FORCES IN HANDLING INCIDENTS.
WITH NEW MOBILITY, POLICE ARE MUCH MORE IN EVIDENCE ON ISTANBUL
STREETS, AND THEIR EFFORTS TO CONTROL WAVE OF VIOLENCE HAVE
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HAD IMPACT. WE NOTE MARKED INCREASE IN ARRESTS OF BOTH
LEFTIST AND RIGHTIST EXTREMISTS. MORE IMPORTANTLY
SUBBICIENT EVIDENCE HAS BEEN COMPLIED TO BRING NUMBER OF

TERRORIST SUSPECTS TO TRIAL, A RARITY LAST YEAR. (IN CASE OF RIGHTISTS THIS HAS INTRODUCED NEW SOURCE OF INCIDENTS WITH RIGHT-WING "KOMMANDOS" PROVOKING VIOLENCE IN COURT-ROOM ITSELF WHEN HEARINGS ARE HELD FOR THEIR COMRADES.) IN ADDITION, NUMBER OF WEAPON AND EXPLOSIVE SEIZURES HAVE BEEN PUBLICIZED, AS HAS CAPTURE OF EXTREME LEFTIST TERRORISTS--INCLUDING THOSE BELIEVED RESPONSIBLE FOR FIRING ON INTERCONTINENTAL. FACT REMAINS, HOWEVER, THAT THERE IS APPARENTLY ENORMOUS SUPPLY OF WEAPONS AND EXPLOSIVE MATERIAL IN HANDS OF EXTREMIST GROUPS, AND THEY ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY UNRESTRAINED IN THEIR USE. YESTERDAY'S ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST PROMINENT POLICE OFFICIAL AND VIRTUAL OPEN SLAUGHTER OF STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY ARE PARTICULARLY DISTURBING.

6. IN REACTION TO LATTER, THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS ARE GATHERING FOR PROTESTS IN SEVERAL PARTS OF CITY TODAY. PREVIOUS PATTERN HAS BEEN THAT AFTER MAJOR VIOLENCE AGGRIEVED GROUP UNDERTAKES RETALIATORY ACTION. IF MARCH 16 INCIDENTS MEAN EVEN MORE INTENSIVE URBAN TERRORISM, ALREADY SEVERELY STRAINED POLICE RESOURCES WILL LIKELY BE INADEQUATE TO HANDLE MAGNITUDE OF PROBLEM. IN THIS CONNECTION, ISTANBUL RESIDENTS ARE MORE AND MORE DISCUSSING PROBABILITY THAT MARTIAL LAW WILL BE DECLARED IN PROVINCE. WE HAVE ONE UN-CONFIRMED REPORT THAT AFTER YESTERDAY'S EVENTS, OFFICERS OF ISTANBUL'S FIRST ARMY WERE CALLED TO THEIR BARRACKS AND ALL LEAVE CANCELLED, AND WE UNDERSTAND ARMY OR "JANDARMA" TROOPS HAVE OCCUPIED ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY.

7. COMMENT: ECEVIT SUPPORTERS IN ISTANBUL USED TO TELL US LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONFIDENTLY THAT ONCE HIS REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY CAME TO POWER POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN TURKEY WOULD END. THEY BASED THIS ON FIRM CONVICTION THAT RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS WERE PRIMARILY TO BLAME AND WERE SO AGGRESSIVE ONLY BECAUSE PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL'S COALITION GOVERNMENT PROTECTED THEM. IT IS BECOMING PRETTY CLEAR THAT (1) RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS ARE TOO FIRMLY ENTRENCHED TO JUST GO AWAY NOW THAT THE RPP IS IN POWER, AND (2) LEFT-WING EXTREMISTS ARE NOT VERY HAPPY WITH ECEVIT EITHER. BOTH SEEM TO US TO BE OPENLY CHALLENGING GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER. FACT IS THAT THERE ARE A LOT OF VERY ALIENATED YOUNG PEOPLE OUT THERE, AND ALTHOUGH THEY MAY HAVE SPEND A LOT OF THEIR ENERGY IN THE PAST CUTTING UP EACH OTHER, SIGNIFICANT PORTION ARE NOW AIMING AT REGIME ITSELF. UNTIL BASIC CHANGES COME TO WIN THEM AWAY FROM POLARIZATION (SEE REFTTEL), IT MAY TAKE SOME DRASTIC ACTION TO LIMIT DAMAGE THEY CAN DO, INCLUDING PERHAPS PERIOD OF MARTIAL LAW IN ISTANBUL.

HOUGHTON

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